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Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Readiness, Committee on Armed
Services, House of Representatives

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June 1991

OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/STORM

Use of Navy and Marine Corps Reserves



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United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

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June 14, 1991

The Honorable Earl Hutto
Chairman, Subcommittee on Readiness
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On April 10, 1991, we briefed your staff on the number and use of Navy and Marine Corps reservists that were activated for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. This report provides updated information, as requested.

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Results in Brief

The Navy activated 21,109 reservists, or 17 percent of the Navy reservists available for call-up. These reservists were called up primarily for their individual skills within mission areas, for example, medicine, intelligence, and logistics. Medical reservists accounted for about one-half of the Navy reservists activated.

The Marine Corps activated 25,710 reservists, or 61 percent of the reservists available from the Select Reserve. These reservists were primarily called up by unit, rather than by individual skill, and served in combat and combat support units that augmented active units such as the I Marine Expeditionary Force in Southwest Asia. The remaining reservists were in combat service support units such as logistics.

Some Navy and Marine Corps reservists have been activated since the cease-fire to provide logistical support in the redeployment of personnel and equipment to the United States. According to Navy and Marine Corps officials, no more Navy and Marine Corps reservists will be needed.

Background

On August 22, 1990, the President authorized the Secretary of Defense to activate up to 200,000 members of the Select Reserve in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.¹ The precise number of reservists to be

¹Two kinds of Navy and Marine Corps reservists were activated during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Members of the Select Reserve are paid to train 1 weekend a month and are activated for 2 weeks a year. Members of the Individual Ready Reserve are unpaid, non-drilling reservists, many of whom have recently completed active duty and are fulfilling the remainder of their military service obligation.

activated was left up to the Secretary of Defense. By January 1991, the President had authorized the Secretary to call up as many as one million reservists, including members of the Individual Ready Reserve.

The Secretary of Defense eventually authorized the Navy and Marine Corps to activate up to 44,000 reservists each. By law, reservists can be activated up to 2 years, but Defense Department officials stated that, as a matter of policy, none would be kept on active duty for more than 1 year.

According to Navy and Marine Corps officials, the call-up proceeded smoothly and the activated reservists performed well, whether serving in Southwest Asia or in some other part of the world.

Navy Reserves

About one-half of the 21,109 activated members of the Navy Select Reserve were medical personnel, even though they represent only about 16 percent of Navy reservists. According to Navy officials, this large number of medical personnel was needed because the Navy provided 50 to 75 percent of all medical beds in support of the Central Command, with two hospital ships and three fleet hospitals in the theater. In addition, Navy reservists provided medical support for Marine Corps reservists. By contrast, ship augmentees represented less than 9 percent of reservists activated, although they represent about 15 percent of all Navy reservists. Table 1 shows the number of Navy reservists activated and available. The "Other" category includes 33 different program categories, each of which represented a small number of the total reservists activated.

Table 1: Navy Reservists Available and Activated for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm

Category	Reservists		Percent of reservists activated ^c
	Available ^a	Activated ^b	
Medicine	19,980	10,452	50
Construction	14,731	2,475	12
Air forces	16,736	1,111	5
Cargo handling	1,924	961	5
Military sealift	1,885	469	2
Ship augmentees	18,687	1,838	9
Other	49,644	3,803	18
Total	123,593	21,109	101

^aData as of December 31, 1990

^bData as of June 6, 1991

^cNumbers do not add to 100 due to rounding

According to Navy officials, the Navy used relatively few ship augmentees because the Iraqi navy posed little open ocean threat. When active ships deploy in peacetime, they have sufficient crew to carry out their combat missions for short periods. Reserve ship augmentee units are used to support active crews during a global war, which generally requires around-the-clock operations. However, operations during Desert Shield and Desert Storm were much less intensive. For example, individual aircraft carriers were normally conducting flight operations about 12 hours each day.

As of mid-June 1991, 3,837 Navy reservists, or about 18 percent of the reservists activated, were still on active duty in Southwest Asia and other parts of the world. They are assisting in the redeployment of personnel and equipment to the United States. The Navy projects that by July 1, 1991, about 7 percent of the reservists activated will still be on active duty.

Marine Corps Reserves

The Marine Corps activated almost all of its combat reserves, which consist of infantry and armored reserve units. Some combat support units were also activated. Table 2 shows the number of reservists activated from the Select Reserve by the command they supported.

Table 2: Marine Corps Select Reservists Activated for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm

Supported command	Reservists activated	Locations where assigned
I Marine Expeditionary Force	2,677	Southwest Asia
II Marine Expeditionary Force	10,440	Southwest Asia
III Marine Expeditionary Force	2,294	Okinawa
Ist Marine Expeditionary Brigade	227	Hawaii
5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade	928	Southwest Asia
V Marine Expeditionary Force	2,208	Camp Pendleton
Other	6,936	Various
Total	25,710	

Note: Data as of March 25, 1991

Marine Corps reservists were integrated with deployed active forces in Southwest Asia in accordance with the Defense Department's Total Force policy. For example, at least 14,000 Marine Corps reservists augmented the I Marine Expeditionary Force and other forces in Southwest Asia.

The Marine Corps also activated about 7,000 members of the Individual Ready Reserve to replace anticipated casualties. However, these reservists were not sent to Southwest Asia because casualties were low.

As of mid-May 1991, 15,523 Marine Corps reservists were still on active duty in Southwest Asia and other parts of the world. They are providing security forces in Iraq and are assisting in the redeployment of personnel and equipment to the United States.

Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our work, we gathered information and interviewed officials from the Offices of the Director of the Naval Reserve; the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Plans, Policies and Operations); the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies and Operations (Marine Corps); the Navy's Atlantic Fleet Headquarters, Norfolk, Virginia; and the Naval Reserve Headquarters, New Orleans, Louisiana. We visited reserve units assigned to the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland, and units training at the Marine Corps Base at Camp Pendleton, California. However, we did not review the performance of the reservists called to active duty or verify the numbers of reservists activated that were provided by Navy and Marine Corps officials. We conducted our review from December 1990 through May 1991 in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. As requested, we did not obtain written comments on this report. However, we discussed its contents with Navy

and Marine Corps officials and incorporated their comments where appropriate.

Please contact me on (202) 275-6504 if you or your staff have any questions. Major contributors to this report were Brad Hathaway, Associate Director; Robert Eurich, Assistant Director; Joseph F. Brown, Evaluator-in-Charge; and Martin E. Scire, Evaluator.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Martin M. Ferber", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin M Ferber
Director, Navy Issues